628 can be pushed around. Thus, even the strongest alliances are tenuous at best, as the possibility is ever present that one of the allies will treacherously turn on the other.

628 152 57 627 In February 1965 the Bisaasi-tedi held a feast for the Mahekodo-tedi and Boreta-tedi. The visitors arrived earlier than scheduled, ate excessively, stole food from the gardens at night, and refused to go home after the feast terminated. The Bisaasi-tedi had not alternative but to challenge the guests to a chest-pounding duel; failure to have done so would have implied that they could be coerced. When the guests were challenged, they packed and departed. For a while the Bisaasi-tedi felt that they had successfully coerced their guests into leaving, presuming that their guests departed out of fear. However, the guests returned that evening to meet the challenge, lest the rumor spread that they themselves were weak and could be intimidated. Just before I left the field a rumor was circulated that the Mǫ̈maribǫ̈wei-tedi had accused the Bisaasi-tedi of weakness, and wanted to fight them to show them they were stronger. The rumor asserted that the Mǫ̈maribǫ̈wei-tedi intended to challenge the Bisaasi-tedi to a chest-pounding duel. The Bisaasi-tedi were enraged when they heard of this rumor, and immediately sent a delegation of men to Mǫ̈maribǫ̈wei-tedi to challenge the men of that village to a fight. But, to show that they were not only not cowards but exceptionally fierce as well, they challenged the Mǫ̈maribǫ̈wei-tedi to a duel with axes! The Mǫ̈maribǫ̈wei-tedi denied the rumor and the duel never took place.

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Fig. 4–4. Many feasts end in prearranged chest-pounding duels; this permits the allies to display the fact that they are friendly but capable of defending their sovereignty. These two men were pounding each other's chests a few minutes before this photo was taken. Here, they embrace each other intimately, vowing eternal friendship, and ask each other for specific trade goods.

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these few minutes the men were rapidly changing the points of their arrows to war tips: curare and lanceolate bamboo. The women and children began to cry, knowing that the situation was getting serious, and they grouped into the farthest corners of their houses near the exits. One by one the men withdrew, returned to their houses, and drew their bows. The visitors pulled back and formed a protective circle around their own women and children, also fitting arrows into their bows and drawing them. The village grew almost silent. The leaders of the respective groups stepped into the no man's land separating the two groups of armed men and began arguing violently, waving axes and clubs at each other. Suddenly, the spokesmen from the visiting group surged toward Kąobawï and his supporters, swinging their axes and clubs wildly at them, forcing them back to the line of men whose bowstrings were drawn taut. Kąobawï and his followers regained their footing and repelled their adversaries at this point, while the women and children from both groups began fleeing from the village, screaming and wailing. It looked as if